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ABSTRACT

The Educational Development Officer (EDO) is a new kind of college administrator, a full-time catalyst for change. In the Junior and Community College Division of the National Laboratory for Higher Education (NLHE), the EDO has been defined as an innovation-minded professional who questions existing practices, works constantly for constructive change, and specializes in the improvement of instruction, both in subject matter and in psychologically sound methodologies. To insure accountability, he requires specific learning objectives; if these are not met, he sees that the ineffective programs are revised. His appointment shows a firm commitment by the college to the improvement of learning, and implies the support, confidence, and cooperation of both administration and faculty. A primary function of the EDO is to help the faculty follow the six essential steps of the systems approach to instruction. To do this, he must (1) train faculty in the necessary skills, (2) help select measurable learning objectives, (3) assist with measurement problems in constructing criterion tests, (4) help design a variety of learning activities, (5) oversee a continuous revision of objectives, and (6) promote research-based decisions throughout the institution insofar as they affect student learning. This brochure describes EDOs in action and lists the 10 topics for which NLHE is now developing self-instructional materials. (HH)

THE EDO | NEW MAN ON THE JUNIOR COLLEGE CAMPUS

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The National Laboratory for Higher Education (NLHE), formerly the Regional Education Laboratory for the Carolinas and Virginia (RELCV), is an independent, nonprofit corporation. Established in 1966, its primary mission is to put the results of educational research into practice. NLHE, headquartered in Durham, N. C., works cooperatively with schools and colleges to improve classroom instruction and to develop more effective management techniques.

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What is an EDO?

An EDO is an Educational Development Officer, a new kind of college administrator: a full-time catalyst for change. Now being translated into practice by the National Laboratory for Higher Education (NLHE) in cooperation with several community colleges, the concept of the EDO can be traced back more than a decade to a widely heralded speech by Ford Foundation executive Philip Coombs. Criticizing the slowness of the change process in higher education, Coombs called for the creation of a new administrative post to spur innovation and constructive change at every institution of higher learning.

In 1965, the concept was applied specifically to the two-year community college by B. Lamar Johnson of UCLA.

As the concept has been refined by NLHE's Junior and Community College Division, the EDO is an innovation-minded professional who questions existing practices and works constantly for constructive change. Since the junior college is devoted to teaching and learning above all else, the EDO functions primarily as a specialist in the improvement of instruction.

In four-year institutions, the EDO serves in a staff capacity to the president and aids constructive change in administrative and organizational practices.

Why does the junior college need an EDO?

The phenomenal growth of junior colleges, both in number and in size, has been accompanied by their rising reputation as institutions providing opportunity for all. Two of the most acclaimed and respected features of the community college are its "open door" admission policies, which promise academic or vocational training to the disadvantaged, and its "superiority" as a teaching institution,

which promises success to the individual learner.

Unfortunately, reputation has often outstripped reality. Frequently, the open door becomes a revolving door. Many students enroll only to fail or drop out, disillusioned. It is true that admission requirements are generally minimal. But unless student needs are met, the open door only creates a traffic problem.

Similarly, if student needs are not met, instruction clearly is not superior; it is not even adequate. There is little evidence that community colleges are superior teaching institutions; in fact, their own personnel have listed instructional improvement as a pressing need. One of the chief difficulties is that most community college instruction is traditional, although many of the students are not.

Inescapably, the community college needs to change in order to fulfill its unique promise. Change, in this case, means instructional improvement which will guarantee learning by the individual student, whatever his background. And the EDO is intended to be the catalyst for just this sort of change.

What is the role of the EDO?

The community college EDO serves as a catalyst for the improvement of instruction and as a specialist in the techniques and resources involved in this process. He provides instructional leadership, assuring that the college is accountable for the learning—or lack of learning—which takes place among its students. Accountability requires setting specific learning objectives; if they are not achieved by the students, the program is ineffective and must be revised.

The EDO sees that sound learning objectives are set, incorporating not only subject matter but also techniques reflecting psychological findings about how people learn. He insures maximum use of research methodologies for improving in-

struction, and sees that research data on student learning play a prime role in institutional planning and decision-making.

How can the EDO help improve instruction?

First, the very creation of his position must represent a firm commitment by the college to improving the quality and increasing the quantity of learning among its students. Second, the EDO must have the solid support of the president and other key administrators, and he must have the confidence and cooperation of the faculty.

In such an environment, the EDO must strive initially to shift the focus of the instructional program from teaching to learning. In simple terms, this means training faculty members to present material so that their students, however diverse in background, can master it. Because of the great diversity among community college students, it is obvious that instruction of this kind must be individualized. At the same time, however, it is clear that instruction of students *en masse* cannot be individualized in the two-on-a-log sense. The systems approach to instruction provides an answer to this dilemma, and the implementation of this approach lies at the heart of the EDO's task.

One of his primary functions is to assist faculty members in employing the systems approach. To do so, the EDO must help faculty develop not only the necessary skills but an accurate understanding of, and a positive disposition toward, the approach itself.

What is the systems approach to instruction?

The systems approach is not, as some of the uninitiated suppose, cold and mechanical. It does not dictate or limit curriculum content. As developed by NLHE's Junior and Community College Division,

the systems approach applies to any course content. It encompasses not only teaching facts and principles but the development of attitudes and personality, and permits a virtually unlimited variety of teaching-and-learning situations.

Essentially, the systems approach is a process consisting of six steps:

1. The instructor derives a rationale for the course, analyzing what the students are to learn and why. In other words, the instructor defines—and defends—the learning goals he sets for his students.
2. Learning goals are broken down into sequences of learning tasks, and each task is stated as an objective with precise performance indicators against which student progress can be measured.
3. The instructor develops a variety of self-instructional learning activities to match the requirements of each learning task and the different learning styles of diverse students.
4. The instructor pretests his students to determine their individual needs and to identify at what point each of them should begin work in the sequence of tasks leading toward the course goals.
5. The instructor posttests his students to determine their mastery of each task in the sequence.
6. The instructional program is continuously evaluated and revised as necessary to increase student mastery of the tasks and, ultimately, the course.

So where does the EDO come in?

The EDO is there at every step of the way. After acquainting faculty with the systems approach and earning their support for it, the EDO supervises its implementation and serves as the faculty's chief source of guidance and of research data. His major functions are:

1. To train faculty in the skills they need to use the systems approach effectively,

providing them with leadership and technical assistance.

2. To help select and state measurable learning objectives, the EDO asks two key questions:

- Is each objective a clear statement of what the student will be able to do as a result of successfully completing a specific task?
- Do course objectives include some which describe a positive attitude toward the subject matter?

The EDO supplies data on student and societal needs to help faculty determine course content, deriving his conclusions from literature review and survey research. For example, the EDO might conduct surveys of student problems, community employment needs, skills required for various occupations and for transfer to senior institutions. He is less concerned with the third area determining course content—subject matter needs—because the teachers are presumably experts in their own disciplines.

3. To help with measurement problems, the EDO serves as a consultant to faculty as they construct criterion tests for the before-and-after measuring of student achievement. Here again, the EDO raises two key questions:

- Is the test accompanied by a scoring key or other information indicating what constitutes adequate performance?
- Are all test items specifically related to the predetermined learning objectives?

The EDO suggests procedures for item sampling, means of employing data-processing systems, and methods for measuring complex objectives.

He also helps establish inter-instructor scoring reliability to promote consistency in assessing student achievement.

4. To help design learning activities, the EDO poses several questions about learning variables:

- Do the activities include frequent practice for the student?

- Will the student have immediate knowledge of his own progress?
- Is course content broken into small units, and does each unit consist of learning steps in sequence?
- Are there provisions for different learning rates?
- Are directions for the student clear?
- Are various media employed to allow for different learning styles?

It is at this stage that the EDO calls on his knowledge of learning principles and theories and of the behavioral sciences. He insures that learning activities are designed to take advantage of psychological findings regarding the learning process.

5. To help with the continuous revision of programs, the EDO operates on two levels. He continues to serve as a resource for faculty, and he conducts instructional research and evaluation.

To assist teachers in the revision of their learning objectives, activities, and tests, the EDO raises three basic questions:

- Did the teacher gather all necessary data on student achievement?
- Did the teacher interview students for added diagnostic data?
- Did the teacher gather data on student attitudes?

In his own research and evaluation, the EDO observes and describes the total impact of the instructional system at each stage of revision. He also investigates alternative learning activities aimed at the same objectives. A principal function of the EDO is to exploit research methodologies for the improvement of instruction, investigating any factor which is thought to influence learning and applying the results directly to the college's program.

6. To promote research-based decisions in all areas of institutional life which affect student learning, the EDO provides data for the college president and others determining administrative policies, practices, and procedures. Some of these areas are: admissions policies,

counseling and placement services, grading practices, and class withdrawal procedures. When decisions are made in learning-related areas, the EDO evaluates the results in terms of their impact on learning. This function is a major one because the EDO is expected to increase the number of administrative decisions which are based on research related directly to learning.

Are there any EDOs now working in community colleges?

Yes. In cooperation with NLHE, 20 community colleges in the Carolinas and Virginia have appointed EDOs. Working closely with the NLHE staff, these EDOs have initiated many learning-improvement projects. Several have conducted research which led to policy changes aimed at increasing the quality and quantity of student achievement.

In a related effort, NLHE and the EDOs are working together to implement the systems approach to instruction. To date, more than 600 faculty members at participating colleges have received training in instructional systems. So have about 600 instructors at other community colleges.

Here is an example of an EDO in action. At one college, the EDO helped a faculty member convert a traditional English composition course into a series of 37 self-instructional units. When the revised course was under way, a volunteer student committee met periodically with the instructor and the EDO to recommend refinements. The EDO gathered statistics on student achievement which were used by the committee as guides to change, resulting in decisions to combine several units, add an optional unit on grammar review, insert sample paragraphs and essays into certain units, and expand the number of theme topics. Students participated in course evaluation, commenting on the skills they acquired, their attitudes toward the course, and its relevance to their academic and career interests.

At semester's end, the EDO compared "before and after" test results to determine how the course revision affected student achievement. He was able to do so because many tests were essentially the same as those used previously, and because students were not specially selected for either the traditional or the revised course. The EDO found that the proportion of students receiving A and B grades rose from 25 to 75 percent in the shift from traditional to "systems" instruction.

Is EDO instruction available?

Yes. NLHE's Junior and Community College Division staff conducts periodic workshops for EDOs, administrators, and faculty in the systems approach to instruction.

Additionally, under development is a series of 10 packages of self-instructional materials for EDOs on the following topics:

1. Objectivity in Data Gathering
2. Selection of Instructional Variables in Light of Learner Characteristics
3. Revising Instructional Materials in Light of Try-Out Data
4. Program Criterion Measures
5. Documenting Multiple Effects of Instruction on Learners
6. Locating, Interpreting, and Displaying Research Evidence
7. Summary Statistics for Documenting Criterion-Referenced Instruction
8. Validity and Reliability of Tests for Criterion-Referenced Instruction
9. Sampling
10. Information Technology Decisions for Instructional Improvement.

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